

M E M O I R S

O F

M^R. W I L S O N:

O R, T H E

P R O V I D E N T I A L A D U L T E R Y.

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N,
Printed for F R A N C I S H A L L,
at his Circulating Library, near the New Church,
in The Strand.

M D C C L X X I.

M E M O I R S

O F

M. WILSON:

O R T H E

PROVIDENTIAL ADULTERY.



I N T W O V O L U M E S .

V O L . I .

L O N D O N ,
Printed for FRANCIS HALL,
at his Circulating Library, near the New Church,
in The Strand.
G D C C L X X I .

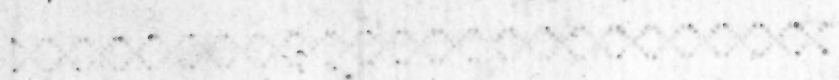


M E M O I R S

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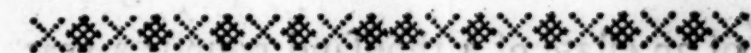
M R W I L S O N



MEMOIRS OF
it for twenty thousand in ready cash, in


MEMOIRS
OF

MR. WILSON.



MR. WILSON on his father's de-
cease became possessed of an
estate worth thirty thousand pounds; but,
being perhaps the most indolent man
living, he thought proper to dispose of

VOL. I. B it

it for twenty thousand in ready cash, in order not to be at the trouble of taking care of it; for he dreaded the thought of any thing which had the least appearance of business: but such affairs as required some degree of attention to him had double terrors. Of all troubles, thought seemed the greatest. To give a trifling order, was fatiguing; but a steward's accompt was more shocking than a bailiff's writ to a poor debtor. Nay, he has been known to declare, that sooner than be troubled with the management of an estate of a thousand pounds a year, he would freely part with it for an annuity of fifty, upon which he might indulge his disposition; and I verily believe, that had he been guilty of any capital offence, a condemnation which would have

have confined him to a counting house would to him have been more terrible than one to deprive him of existence.

Mr. Wilson so far gloried in the lassitude of his disposition, that he had very ingeniously, and with a wonderful deal of trouble and contrivance, reduced idleness into a compleat system, and in the defence of his hypothesis had parodied two celebrated lines of Nat Lee's of frantic memory, which he constantly repeated as a general answer to any sarcastical reflections on his natural bent :

“ Pleasures there are, which to the

“ idle flow ;

“ And none those pleasures but the

“ idle know.”

When he had disposed of his estate, he lodged the money in the funds, which he looked upon as exerting himself once for all; and was very happy to think he should have no farther trouble about it, but what would naturally occur at the expiration of every six months, when he should go to receive the interest, which in all conscience he thought trouble enough.

He now sat down, pleasing his dis-tempered imagination with the thoughts of the *sublimely sleeping raptures*, the *supremely drowsy extasies*, which he should feel in the uninterrupted enjoyment of a most delicious state of idleness.

“ I can

“ I can now,” says he very philosophically, “ eat, drink, sleep, and—
“ *act* I was going to say — but *not* act I
“ mean — just as I please, without being
“ fatigued with domestic concerns. I
“ shall be a very happy fellow. I
“ pity those poor mortals who are always
“ drudging, either for fame, honour, or
“ wealth. Exercise was sure the worst
“ plague that ever issued from the fa-
“ bled *box of Pandora*. My poor misera-
“ ble neighbours will take more trouble
“ after a stinking fox, which is not
“ worth the shadow of a thought when
“ obtained, than I would do after a
“ Spanish plate fleet. — Deluded
“ wretches! mistaken mortals! to what
“ troubles, what hazards, what fatigues,

6 MEMOIRS OF

“do ye not expose yourselves, when
“a quiet life is so easy to obtain! And
“my friend too, Justice Quidit, takes
“more pains to destroy a barrel of ale
“than ever were taken to brew it. Poor
“man! I can but pity what I must de-
“spise. A King is most certainly a mi-
“serable being, who would be so foolish
“as to accept of a kingdom, when at
“the same time he must be plagued to
“govern it.”

Thus, with a fancied apathy, did Mr. Wilson persuade himself that happiness consisted in not having any thing to do; when the very sources of bliss are by the wise and bountiful Author of Nature placed in action.

Being

Being one day informed that his gardener frequently robbed him of his fruit and sold it privately, he very calmly replied, "he must be obliged to put up with it; for it required too much trouble to make enquiries after the character of servants (before it was possible to find one unexceptionably honest) for him to think of changing."

But, being a batchelor, he was often obliged to attend to domestic altercations; for, as he did not chuse to govern his family himself, his servants determined to do it for him; the consequence of such a determination was, numberless contentions for the superiority. He likewise found himself frequently obliged to give

B 4

orders,

8 MEMOIRS OF

orders, when his attendants were at a loss how to act if he remained dumb. He was by such things roused from the stupefaction which he thought so enchanting; and having, at the end of about eight months, brought himself to think upon the subject, he found that he was not altogether so secure of not having his thoughts interrupted as he could wish.

Such difficulties at first seemed insurmountable, or at least an Herculean labour to overcome; but nothing is impossible to an ingenious man. He in a short time hit upon a very wise remedy.

“I am happy in a fertile invention,” said he, pluming himself upon his important

portant discovery. " I will take a wife;
" then shall I be entirely released from
" all domestic embarrassments. But
" let me be prudent in my choice:
" caution is an excellent companion,
" and ought to be placed among the
" virtues, since it prevents much trouble,
" and gives none.

" I will not marry a woman equal to
" myself in fortune—no—no—too much
" form and fatiguing ceremony is re-
" quisite in addressing such an one;
" for your women of condition would
" have a man hurry himself into a con-
" sumption before they will give him their
" hand. Then they must see genteel
" company that are more tiresome than
" one's own servants, and attend to ce-

“remonials as fatiguing to learn as the
“mathematics; so that, when a man is
“almost dead through an intolerably la-
“borious courtship before marriage, the
“poor wretch has no sooner suffered
“the priest to tie the fatal knot, than
“they fairly rattle him into his grave,
“with drums, routs, visits, noise, and
“tumults — but such doings won’t suit
“me.

“Neither will I take a wife from the
“poorer herd. She would require more
“necessary instructions to qualify her to
“become an useful helpmate to a man
“of my disposition, than I should chuse
“to be at the trouble of giving her;
“and perhaps I could not with strict
“propriety set any body else to tutor her
“in

“ in some of the most essential points she
“ ought to learn.

“ I am determined not to chuse from
“ an exalted or an indigent situation.
“ A middling station is the most eligible :
“ from that I'll take a wife ; one who
“ is well versed in family affairs ; who
“ will not, when raised, be above pru-
“ dence ; who perfectly understands that
“ the business of a wife is to take all do-
“ mestic trouble from her husband ;
“ but who is entirely unacquainted with
“ the riots of a court, or the bustle of
“ politeness ; in fine, one who will be
“ contented to suppose I rule, without
“ putting me to the trouble of exerting
“ my authority to prove it.”

When he had finished this rhapsody, he fancied that Seneca himself could not have reasoned better, nor Machiavel have plotted more to the purpose.

While Mr. Wilson was thus in his own mind applauding his penetration, Mr. Rostrum, the minister of the parish, came to pay him a visit.

After some introductory discourse on common and trivial subjects, Mr. Rostrum, pulling a paper out of his pocket, addressed himself to Mr. Wilson :

“ I have here, Sir, an example of
“ what I am afraid the present age is too
“ well acquainted with ; I mean, the
“ prostitution

“prostitution of some excellent talents,
“which, properly exerted, might prove
“beneficial to mankind. It is an Ode
“to Indolence, the production of Miss
“Stirnot, a young lady of a neighbour-
“ing parish, beautiful in the highest
“degree, and possessed of very great a-
“bilities, which she puts to no manner
“of use, by an unconquerable inclina-
“tion to be idle.”

So saying, he put the paper into Mr. Wilson's hand; whose curiosity being excited by the clergyman's discourse, he perused it with a degree of attention which he did not commonly bestow upon any thing.

It

It may be imagined by Mr. Rostrum's words, that he had designedly put a satire into Mr. Wilson's hands, under the form of a panegyric, on his ridiculous, and, as I may with propriety say, unnatural passion. But I must here undeceive the reader, by assuring him that Mr. Rostrum was entirely unacquainted with the disposition of the gentleman to whom he had been speaking, as Mr. Wilson's detestation of all kind of bustle and ceremony rendered him very reserved, and, to speak candidly, rather unsocial. Neither had he been much at the family mansion, which was in Leicestershire, during the life of his father; for at that time he was, as he himself always expressed it, in slavery; but, as the reader may not an-

nex

nex the same ideas to things as Mr. Wilson did, it may not be amiss to inform him, that the place of his slavery was no other than the university of Oxford. His course of studies he looked upon as a downright Egyptian servitude, and the professors appeared in the unfavourable light of task-masters.

As the reader may have a desire to see the Ode as well as Mr. Wilson, we, who make politeness (at least that part which consists in complaisance) our daily practice, think it eligible to gratify him:

A N O D E

TO

INDOLENCE.

I.

"Oh! INDOLENCE, within thy arms

Let me in slumbers lie!

Bless'd in the stillness of thy charms,

From busy scenes I fly.

II.

II.

Hence, busy, working, thinking Care,
The eldest-born of Grief.
Come, Indolence, for ever dear,
And bring my soul relief.

III.

Tumultuous joys, be far away,
For I your chains despise:
But with the empty mortals play,
Too busy to be wise.

IV.

Ye Fates, who o'er my lot preside,
Let me have nought to do;
But let my days serenely glide,
My actions be but few.

V.

V.

Oh! may I, with less action blest'd,
As days to days succeed,
Supinely sink to native rest
'Till death be life indeed."

When Mr. Wilson had read these lines with an eagerness rather too fervent for a soul devoted to apathy, he told Mr. Roftrum, he should be eternally his debtor, if he would announce to the fair authoress of these beautiful lines (as he termed them) the great inclination he had to be ranked among the number of her acquaintance. This request, which to the clergyman appeared very extraordinary, was productive of the following dialogue; for jarring opinions are the very life and soul of conversation.

Mr.

Mr. ROSTRUM.

“ Pardon me, Sir, if I cannot think
“ you serious when you tell me you
“ wish to be acquainted with Miss
“ Stirnot. What emotion could the prof-
“ titution, or rather the neglect, of such
“ shining talents, excite in you but pity?
“ Her friends mourn for her in propor-
“ tion as they despair of reclaiming her;
“ and even the least dispassionate allow
“ that she might render herself and
“ those connected with her extremely
“ happy in this world, and secure an
“ eternity of bliss in the next, by exert-
“ ing those endowments which an all-
“ bountiful Providence has thought pro-
“ per to bestow upon her.”

Mr.

Mr. WILSON.

“ Why, Sir, do you look upon action
“ alone as compatible with happiness?
“ May not we serve God better con-
“ templatively than manually? or is
“ the source of happiness in this life
“ placed in those things which exhaust,
“ and consequently destroy, life?”

Mr. ROSTRUM.

“ Happiness, my good Sir, can alone
“ spring from action. The great Author
“ of ourselves, whose chief end is hap-
“ piness, formed us by action. Mutual
“ wants and dependencies have made
“ action necessary to self-preservation;
“ and universal industry is the preventive
“ of

“ of universal misery. Reason teaches us
“ action ; instinct directs brutes to pro-
“ cure subsistence, and stand upon their
“ defence by means of unwearied dili-
“ gence and precaution : as action is ne-
“ cessary, it must therefore be indispen-
“ sable.”

MR. WILSON.

“ Mr. Rostrum, I can admire your
“ eloquence, without being convinced.
“ Let me propose a plain proposition to
“ you. Which do you think was the hap-
“ piest mortal, Alexander the Great, or
“ the philosopher Diogenes ? Alexander,
“ who, being already possessed of his he-
“ reditary kingdom, and reclining in the
“ delicious lap of peace, yet, by a rest-
“ less

"less disposition, was stimulated to run
 "a thousand hazards, to traverse un-
 "necessarily many thousand weary
 "leagues, to be in continual anxieties,
 "and never to know the blessings of re-
 "pose; or Diogenes, who, devoted to
 "ease, contented himself to remain in-
 "active in the circumscribed limits of a
 "tub?"

Mr. Rostrum.

"Mr. Pope, in a brief manner, has
 "given his opinion of heroes very justly,
 "in the following lines:

"Heroes are much the same, it is
 "agreed,
 "From Macedonia's madman to the
 "Swede.

"Which

“ Which opinion I entirely adopt—
“ you have therefore my sentiments con-
“ cerning Alexander. As for Diogenes
“ —I think him the most ridiculous
“ madman of the two.”

MR. WILSON.

“ How, Sir? Diogenes a madman?”

MR. ROSTRUM.

“ Patience, Sir, a few minutes : I’ll
“ explain my meaning immediately, and
“ leave yourself to judge. The grand
“ source of the madness of Diogenes was,
“ mistaking singularity for philosophy.
“ Amidst numberless bad or rash actions
“ to which Alexander was prompted by
“ his

“ his ambition, he sometimes did a ge-
“ nerous or humane thing; but Dio-
“ genes beheld mankind in general with
“ an eye of disgust, and consequently
“ could have no very great respect for
“ the Author of Nature. In his observa-
“ tions on human nature, he turned that
“ end of the perspective which magnified
“ vices and diminished virtues. Alex-
“ ander was pleased with himself when
“ applauded, and pleased with those
“ who applauded him; if he did much
“ mischief, he did some good: but
“ Diogenes was neither pleased with
“ himself nor any body else; he never
“ did any good; but, on the contrary,
“ his example has been productive of
“ much evil, by giving a precedent of
“ the

“ the contempt, or at least pretended
“ contempt, of the necessaries as well as
“ luxuries of this life. The ambition of
“ Alexander was a kind of pride in some
“ measure excusable by its frequency;
“ the misanthropy of Diogenes was a
“ kind of pride which could only spring
“ from a bad heart, and therefore excusa-
“ ble upon no account whatsoever. In
“ short, it was that sort of pride by which
“ the affectation of plainness in a quaker
“ is more ridiculous than the gaudy pa-
“ geantry of the most conceited cox-
“ comb.”

Mr. Wilson perceived that the argu-
ments which Mr. Rostrum made use of
had great weight: though he did not ab-
solutely find conviction, he found that it

would give him more trouble to refute them than he chose to take; he therefore replied in a careless manner, "It perhaps may be so; I cannot say that I have considered the point sufficiently to continue the controversy."

Mr. Rostrum quickly perceived that he was no longer a welcome guest, which made him soon take his leave, and depart; for he no ways resembled the generality of the sons of the church, who imagine their profession a sanction for impertinent intrusion.

However warm Mr. Wilson might be on the behalf of a lady whose disposition so nearly resembled his own; yet, as he was a man of good sense, though his

sense wanted the spur of action, he plainly perceived the impropriety of an alliance with a person so much like himself. It was not one who would do nothing that would suit his purpose and conveniency; but one who would, if I may be allowed the expression, be double diligent, and do her own business and his too. He was soon introduced to a Miss Sharpley, who, being apprised of his temper and disposition, required but little ceremony; and the nuptials in a short time were celebrated with as little noise and stir as possible, to avoid the customary impertinence of congratulations.

Mrs. Wilson had a tolerable share of beauty, which received great detriment

from an intolerable share of affectation. She was naturally vain, and it may be easily imagined that her advancement did not tend to diminish her vanity; but in disposition she was the very reverse of her husband, for she never thought herself happy but when her spirits were in a flutter.

As indolence had for a long time been the reigning doctrine of the family, the whole house seemed to have been in a dream, from which it was awakened by its mistress, who new modeled and regulated it according to her own notions of propriety.

The servants were obliged to be more circumspect than formerly in their words
and

and conduct. Every thing wore a face of novelty; and Mr. Wilson, with the greatest self-complacency and inward satisfaction, congratulated himself on his own wonderful sagacity, in chusing a person as a partner for life who was so very capable of managing a family; as every alteration appeared to be considerably for the better, and all that Mrs. Wilson did or said seemed absolutely right: at least, he had too good an opinion of his own judgement, to suppose that a woman whom in the height of his wisdom he had taken as an helpmate could possibly be wrong in any thing.

Within the twelvemonth Mrs. Wilson was brought to bed of a fine boy, to the great joy of the family, except the

C 3

father,

father, who was merely satisfied with the occurrence; for he found extasies to be much too laborious to have any admittance into his system of happiness. The child, which was christened Francis, was confined to the nursery till it was six years of age.

Mrs. Wilson all this time was employed in giving specimens of her power to the servants, and ruling the family with a rod of iron, which to an indulgent husband might very easily appear to be prudent housewifery, and necessary severity; while Mr. Wilson with the greatest care and circumspection took a wondrous deal of pains to do nothing.

Mrs.

Mrs. Wilson undertook to inspect the education of little Franky, whose disposition even in nonage appeared to be widely different from his father's: an enterprising genius was visible to an attentive observer, and his mind and body seemed to be in continual agitation.

A private tutor, named Volpone, was entertained in the family, to cultivate the intellects of Mr. Wilson's son and heir. He entered upon his office, documented with the following necessary precautions by Mrs. Wilson: "never to chide Master Franky, lest he should curb his spirit, and
"make him too pusillanimous and meek;
"but at the same time never to let him
"want correction, lest he should grow too

“ bold—to oblige him to attend his book
“ at every opportunity, that he might not
“ be a dunce; but not to let him read too
“ much, lest he should hurt his eyes, and
“ learn to poke his chin in his neck—to
“ prevent him from sitting long in a pos-
“ ture, to chill his blood; or from running
“ about, to overheat it—to give him his
“ way, to encourage him; but to contradict
“ him, to teach him compliance—to sooth
“ him into a laudable pride; and to cross
“ him into humility.”

Mr. Volpone plainly perceived that it would be impossible for him to comply entirely with the absurd and contradictory directions he was likely to receive in this family, and therefore very honestly determined to treat them with a total neglect,

glect, that he might employ his whole assiduity in the study of Mrs. Wilson's temper.

Mr. Volpone was about six and forty years of age, and under the most sanctified countenance concealed the most villainous inclinations: avarice and ambition in conjunction swayed his soul, and several deserved rebuffs and disappointments in life had given him such a misanthropical way of thinking, that to deceive and ruin mankind was to him the supremest enjoyment.

He soon found Mrs. Wilson's blind side, and made use of his discovery accordingly, by paying his court implicitly to her weakness: he succeeded to his wish,

by obtaining her entire confidence, and a friendship which on her side was sincere.

Mr. Wilson's inactive way of life had thrown him into a decline ; and when he was informed by the physicians that nothing but exercise could re-establish his health, he told them, " they were a parcel
" of ignorant empirics, to pretend that
" would assist him which would certainly
" destroy him, to prescribe exercise as a
" remedy when nothing but ease could be
" beneficial."

Thus obstinately bent on a perseverance in the indulgence of his favourite foible, he fell a resolute martyr to indolence in the flower of his age, being but four and thirty when he died.

When

When his funeral obsequies were over, Mrs. Wilson, who appeared to be inconsolable for the loss of so quiet, easy, affable, and good a husband, devoted herself entirely to a deity whom Mr. Wilson had never known she worshiped; and indeed she was so private in her devotions during her husband's life-time, that it was hardly possible for him to get the least inkling of the affair: I mean, Bacchus, the jolly god of red noses and broken shins. She was so zealous in her adoration of this deity, and so fervent in the Bacchanalian mysteries, that it greatly impaired her health; which the artful Volpone perceiving, redoubled his assiduity and attention, which so entirely won on the credulity of the infatuated widow,

that she immediately made her will, bequeathing to him a legacy of five hundred pounds, and making him her sole executor: to this power she added the guardianship of her darling son, with a stipulated yearly appointment as a gratuity for his trouble.

In a short time after she had made her will, her favourite cordials eased her of all her cares in this life, and sent her to the assistance of her deceased helpmate in the other; though her death was attended with some suspicion that Volpone had been qualifying some of the bottles with a composing draught of his own preparation.

Mrs.

Mrs. Wilson's will had been witnessed only by two favourite servants, who, being possessed of a considerable sum of money, determined to join their stocks together by marriage; which being soon after performed, they set out for Ireland, their native country.

Volpone soon after received an authentic account, that the ship wherein they sailed had been lost, and that every soul in it had perished. He exulted exceedingly at the intelligence, and determined as soon as possible to avail himself of it to his own emolument.

Although Volpone had entirely neglected the education of young Wilson,
nature

nature had been kind, by supplying him with an imagination uncommonly bright, and a memory tenaciously retentive. He had happily availed himself of the favours of our common Parent, and, by an application at once laudable and intense, had made himself master of those accomplishments, of which, through Volpone's omission of duty, he must have been totally ignorant, had his temper been as indolent as his father's.

Volpone placed him in a public seminary, with a very circumscribed allowance, which occasioned him to undergo numberless mortifications, and so exasperated him against his guardian, that the very day he arrived at age he set out for Volpone's, and upon his arrival immediately

ately demanded an accompt of his fortune.

But figure to yourself the surprize of Julius Cæsar when he saw his beloved Brutus among those who had conspired against his life, and were about to perpetrate the horrid murder — the image may present you with an idea of Mr. Wilfon's consternation, when Volpone informed him, “that his mother cut him “ off with a shilling.”

“Cut me off!” he cried; “my fond, my “ doating, my loving, and beloved mother, cut me off with a shilling! impossible!”

Not

“Not at all impossible,” replied the calm villain — “there’s no accounting for women’s whims — besides, the perverseness of your disposition had intirely alienated her affections from you: her whole fortune she bequeathed to me; but I, out of a tender regard for you, and overlooking your numberless faults, as well as from the natural benevolence of my disposition, have never acquainted you with the truth till now, when your precipitation and insolence make such an eclaircissement necessary. Besides,” the villain concluded with a malicious smile of exulting satisfaction, “you must be very sensible that it little behoves you to behave in so unbecoming a manner, since you owe your education
“entirely

“entirely to my good nature and com-
“passion.”

Amazement prevented Mr. Wilson from replying, or he would hardly have permitted Volpone to have proceeded thus far: but at length his rage subsiding sufficiently to allow him utterance, and fired with indignation at such a piece of complicated villainy, he demanded a fight of the will; when Volpone told him very coolly, “that it was registered in the com-
“mons; therefore, as he had already made
“one journey to him to demand a fight of
“it, he had nothing farther to do but to
“make another to the commons, where he
“would be informed that such a demand
“was impertinent.”

Stagnated

Stagnated at the effrontery with which he meant to cover his villainy with the appearance of an integrity conscientiously calm, and astonished at his cavalier manner of behaviour, poor Mr. Wilson quitted the house, and, upon searching the commons for the will, he was morally certain that it must be a forged one, since its purport was what Volpone asserted it to be.

After making the most diligent enquiries, and obtaining the best advice, he found he must submit to his fate; for the artful villain had taken his measures too securely to be easily dispossessed of that to which he had contrived to make the law

law give him a title, so contrary to the rules of equity.

With a proper and manly resignation Mr. Wilson kissed the wayward hand of fortune, and determined, by frugality, industry, and an intense application to business, to regain her favours; convinced of the validity of the celebrated Latin motto, *Labor omnia vincit*; and, as things turned out so contrary to his expectations, congratulating himself upon being of a disposition so diametrically opposite to that of his father.

By the help of a distant relation, who had scarcely ever been noticed by the family, yet had always been fond of young Francis, he procured an appointment

ment to go to Boston in New England, as supercargo to a merchant, and was fitted out for the station accordingly by this relation.

Before he departed from his native country, he resolved to pass one social evening at a tavern which he had frequented during his short residence in London. After supper, the discourse naturally turned upon his intended departure, and the misfortune which compelled him to take such a voyage, when, Volpone's name being mentioned with a proper degree of detestation, a young gentleman, who had never heard of his connection with Mr. Wilson, told the company that he was not any way surprized at the villainy of the fact, since it

was

was transacted by Volpone, one of the most expert agents of the infernal enemy to mankind; and offered, if it was agreeable to the company, to give them a recital of some of the principal actions of this notorious disgrace to human nature, assuring them he was well enabled to perform the task, as he was thoroughly acquainted with many of his diabolical schemes and flagitious transactions, from his childhood till near the time of his entering into Mr. Wilson's family, as he afterwards found upon comparing dates.

The company assured him they should be greatly obliged to him for the narrative, as the actions of the villainous could

could not be too much exposed, in order to put mankind upon their guard.

The company being silent, he began thus :

“MEMOIRS

“M E M O I R S
OF A
V I L L A I N.

VOLPONE's real name is Smith, which for several cogent reasons he has thought proper to change for the appellation by which he is at present distinguished.

Nothing in nature is more undeniably true than the reciprocal proverb, which
affirms,

affirms, "that a wise man may beget a
" fool, and a fool become father to a wise
" man;" by the same alternative in the
principles of generation, an honest man
may have a knavish son, and a rogue
have a man of integrity for his heir.
This was exactly the case with respect to
Volpone, whose father was a man of
strict honesty, by trade a jeweller, who,
though in no wise opulent, maintained
his family with a kind of decent gen-
tility.

Volpone was an only child, and con-
sequently engrossed the whole attention
of his parents. When he was about five
years of age, he was placed at a very
genteel day school, where his genius for
the polite arts and for knavery kept
pace

pace together, though they were not equally conspicuous, for he was a thorough master of hypocrisy from his childhood.

His natural disposition to cringe and fawn, which was accounted good nature, together with his application to his studies and rapid improvements, won the hearts of both his parents and tutors.

During his attendance on this school, books were continually missing, for which the children of the poorest parents were continually blamed, though Volpone was the only guilty person, who found means to dispose of them to a

man who kept a book-stall at some distance.

His avaricious temper appeared very early. When any one of his playfellows had lost his marbles, he was always ready to supply his wants, provided he placed something in his custody which should be more than equivalent to the value of the marbles, by way of security; and on these conditions, that he was to keep the pawn if the person so favoured lost; but on the contrary, if he won, it was a stipulated point, that Volpone should receive a fourth of the number he had lent, over the said number, by way of interest.

He

He watched such children as were cloyed with food by their fondly mistaken parents, and frequently purchased their rolls and butter, or rolls and treacle, for a trifle, which he immediately resold at a considerable profit to others, the craving of whose appetites stimulated them to part from their money.

Like a true connoisseur in the human heart, whenever his companions appeared weary of their toys, he seized the opportunity to convert them to his own use, and enjoyed them till an occasion presented to avail himself of the juvenile avidity of others, and to gain an exorbitant consideration.

As he grew up, he improved in roguery, and frequently found opportunities of converting several stray stones and jewels, belonging to his father, to his own private emolument; which he was enabled to do, by his acquaintance with a Jew boy, who brought him acquainted with his father, as honest an Israelite as ever made his exit at Tyburn: this worthy son of Levi soon perceived our hero's disposition, and, by tampering with it, found his account in their private negotiations, very much to his own satisfaction.

Volpone did not, like other boys, squander away the fruits of his ingenuity; no, prudence in him was an innate

innate principle, and avarice his ruling passion: he hoarded up his money with the greatest privacy possible, as his mind foreboded that time would present him with an occasion of turning it to advantage.

In his father's neighbourhood was a capital oil shop: the till was fixed to a pillar which supported the roof of the shop; he had frequently observed the servant change gold from the till, and afterwards put the gold in an apartment belonging to the same till, but separate from the silver, from whence he concluded, that a considerable sum of money was generally deposited therein.

He had likewise observed, that when any person went to the shop for pickled walnuts, the servant always fetched them from the cellar in whatever vessel the customer brought, who was always left in the shop till he came up again: this he knew to be a fair opportunity, if the master happened to be at dinner (as no person then but the man would be in the shop), to examine the till. The only article which made him doubtful of his success, in gaining possession of part of its contents, was his uncertainty with respect to its being left locked or unlocked: however, he resolved to spend a few pence in clearing up his doubts.

To

To this end, he bought a common stone bason, and about the dusk of the evening repairing to the shop, he asked for two-penny-worth of pickled walnuts: the shopman took his bason, and immediately descended into the cellar for them; he had before watched the master's going out, and had therefore nothing to do but to examine the till, which, to his great joy, he found open: he slipped his hand into it with great dexterity, and drew forth a guinea, with which he at that time contented himself.

The man returned, gave him his pickled walnuts, received the twopence (not in the least suspecting what had passed); and he left the shop with an

air as unconcerned as if inspired by conscious integrity.

He continued this practice, till he had extracted from the till, at different times, by the same means, better than twenty pounds: the servant knew nothing of the matter; the master, who frequently counted the money in the day time, at night would often be very much surprized to find the sum lessened, though he had seen several additions made to it subsequent to the time of his inspection.

He informed some neighbours, in whom he could confide, of the affair; and taking them with him one morning, he counted the money belonging to the till before them, unperceived by the shopman;

shopman; he then went and passed the day with them: they all returned together at night; and counting the money, seventeen shillings were missing, for Volpone had that afternoon made bold with two guineas, and only five and twenty shillings had been taken in the shop, so that a deficiency of seventeen shillings consequently appeared.

Every former surmise of the master's was now confirmed, and the opinion of his friends gave a sanction to his suspicions; he sent for a constable immediately, and ordered him to take his servant into custody, not in the least regarding his asseverations of innocence: he was taken before a justice of the peace, who committed him to Newgate.

He took his trial at the Old Bailey at the ensuing sessions; and circumstances appearing strong against him, he was condemned to be transported for life.

He had a wife and two children, who depended solely on his labour. Tears, prayers, supplications, and petitions, were tried; but all being found ineffectual, he set sail in the ship destined to convey the transports to Virginia.

This accident obliged Volpone to refrain from any similar attempt for some time; but his insatiable avarice at length prompted him to repeat those particulars which he found so lucrative.

As

As sufferings make people suspicious, the master had since the above affair been very circumspect with regard to every article which concerned the shop: Volpone had therefore not made many successful journies to the till, before he fell under his immediate suspicion; he communicated his thoughts to his new servant, who came to him recommended in the strongest manner for honesty and fidelity: they agreed upon a plot to detect him, and put it in execution accordingly.

At dinner time, and towards the evening, the usual times of Volpone's appearance, the master for several days waited upon the cellar stairs, to be ready

to fall upon him the moment the servant had taken his basin for the walnuts, and retired from the shop: a week expired unsuccessfully; at length Volpone appeared about the close of the day, and their plot had the desired effect; for he was detected in the very fact, and a marked guinea, which he had that moment taken from the till, found in his hand.

His father was immediately sent for; and being made acquainted with the affair, he strove to compromise matters amicably, and with as little stir as possible; which was effected, more out of respect to himself, than any regard which might

might be paid to his son's promises of amendment.

His father took him that very evening into the country, not knowing, if the affair should take wind, what other complaints of a like nature might appear against him from other neighbours, as he began to look upon his son in a quite different light from what he had ever before beheld him : and did not imagine that this artful affair was the only one of the kind he had ever transacted. He therefore wisely placed him in a country boarding school, with a particular charge to keep a very strict eye over him.

The

The master now repented his severity to his servant, and was very assiduous till he had procured an order from the Secretary's office, signed by his Majesty, and sealed with the great seal of England, to recal him from an undeserved banishment. In the mean time he provided for his wife and two children, whom he took out of the workhouse, where they had been ever since the poor man's misfortune.

On the return of a vessel from Virginia, the master was informed that his unhappy servant had been seized with a fever soon after his departure from England, which had ended his life in a very short time. This intelligence so affected his

6

wife,

wife, that she immediately fainted away, became delirious, and expired in about three days after in the greatest agonies.

All imaginable care was taken of the children; but the eldest, a girl of about fourteen years of age, was afflicted to such a degree on the death of her mother, that she was seized with convulsions, that brought on a fever, which her brother who could never be kept from her caught, and they both fell victims to its malignancy.

The master, finding himself the innocent cause of so many misfortunes, pined with inward grief, and fell into a decline, that soon put a period to his existence. Thus was Volpone's first capital

tal piece of villainy the destruction of five innocent people.

But to return to our hero. He could not find at Mr. Definer's school, where his father had placed him, any opportunity of playing the pranks he would have been glad to have exhibited, or rather to have acted unseen: but idleness was no ways pleasing to him, his imagination was too warm to remain inactive; he therefore plied his book with double diligence, in order to regain his father's good graces, if possible; he thoroughly understood whatever he attempted to investigate, and his genius seemed to be the sword which was to cut the Gordian knot of the sciences; which example should warn any persons of
shining

shining talents from pluming themselves too much on their natural and acquired accomplishments, unless a benevolence of heart, and rectitude of principles, give a sanction to their self-approbation.

When our hero arrived at his sixteenth year, his father articted him to an attorney, to serve a five years clerkship.

In this station his genius had full scope: he carefully studied the wrong side of the law, and thumbed over numberless volumes of reports and cases, to find out precedents to befriend villainy in others, and to levy with impunity

punity unjust contributions on mankind himself.

About this time his father was bound in a very considerable sum for an acquaintance, who treacherously left him to the mercy of the creditor, escaping to Holland to secure himself from others who became importunate in their demands. This affair broke his wife's heart, and himself soon after followed her to the grave, dying insolvent.

Volpone was now disappointed in the schemes which he had formed; in expectation of what he should enjoy after his father's decease; he found, he must now be obliged entirely to his own diligence

gence and ingenuity in attaining a fortune, the *summum bonum* of his most sanguine wishes.

He remained with the attorney till that gentleman died, which happened about four years after his being articled to him; not that you are to suppose he lived honest all this time: for he availed himself of his talents, to the increase of his ill-gotten board, whenever any opportunity presented.

Volpone was now left to the wide world, to shift for himself; his whole fortune consisted of a tolerably decent wardrobe, and about two hundred pounds in ready money: he was sensible that so small a capital would allow him

to

to cut but a trifling figure as an attorney, and the insignificancy of his situation would effectually bar the gates of preferment against him : he determined therefore to look out for some avocation which might present a fairer prospect of future golden days.

In a short time, he heard of a gentleman, named Tangent, that kept an eminent boarding school, at the distance of about twenty miles from London, who wanted a person as an assistant : to this gentleman Volpone found means to get himself recommended ; terms were mutually agreed to, and Volpone entered chearfully upon his new employment.

He

He was to receive a salary of fifty guineas per annum, which, together with some very considerable perquisites, he deemed preferable to any of the lower places under the government, where the salary is very small, and the advancement but slow; and his interest did not extend to the procuration of any thing considerable.

He had not been long in this place, before an elderly gentlewoman, who kept a ladies boarding school in the neighbourhood, employed him, upon an advantageous stipend, to attend her school twice in the week, in order to teach the young ladies French; by this means he had an opportunity of considering more attentively

attentively than he had hitherto done, the charms of the beautiful part of the creation. One young lady, above the rest, particularly attracted his notice. Volpone's heart was very susceptible of lascivious impressions: he fancied at first, that when he gazed upon her, it was only with a kind of philosophical curiosity, as upon one of the fairest copies of the works of nature; but when he perceived that he was uneasy when absent from the school, and his behaviour constrained before the beautiful Lucinda, altho' disengaged when she was not present, his penetration would not any longer permit him to remain self-deluded; he perceived that the God of Love had wounded him, though he had not absolutely

solutely blinded him. I will repeat you an Elegy, descriptive of Lucinda's person, which Volpone composed while under the highest paroxysm of his passion, which I have been informed (for I never saw the lady myself) is no exaggeration, though wrote by a lover:

BEAUTY.

B E A U T Y.

AN

E L E G Y.

I.

“ Come, bright Imagination, to my aid,
 Till I the portrait of Lucinda show,
 And, while I paint the beauties of the maid,
 Assist, Description, and augment the
 glow.

II. Then

II.

Then let me first depict a snowy skin,
Such as might grace the bosom of a
queen,
Where the blue swelling veins appear
within
In tides of blood meandering to be seen.

III.

Lips of vermillion hue, and glowing
cheeks
That shame the blushes of the bud-
ding rose;
A sparkling eye, where humid bright-
ness speaks,
And radiant glory into meaning flows.

IV.

A rising forehead delicately high,
Form'd from beholders to command
respect;
A lily neck, where thousand Cupids lie
With jetty ringlets elegantly deck'd.

V.

An easy pleasing prominence of breast,
Where the warm hills of animated
snow
Pant up and down, as sueing to be press'd,
Shrink from the touch, and shrinking
doubly glow.

VI.

VI.

A pleasing motion and a winning mien,
A look attractive and a sprightly air;
Yet blushing modesty, conspicuous
seen,

Illumines ev'ry action of the faire

VII.

The soul with sounds melodious to en-
trance,

The instrumental and the vocal swell,
To lead with artful step the mazy dance,
Swim to soft notes, or on the figure
dwell :

VIII.

Graces to others arts like these bestow;
But from Lucinda, to all graces born,
Receive more charms than she to them
can owe,
Adorn'd by her, while aiming to
adorn."

By this Elegy, which in some measure display's Volpone's poetical abilities, we may perceive that Lucinda's beauty only was the object of his admiration and passion, though I have been credibly informed that the beauties of that young lady's mind exceeded those of her person; but the villainous soul of Volpone was

incapable of a rational attachment ; the tender feelings of two hearts devoted to virtue, and the seraphic part of the soft passion, he had no manner of conception of: avarice, ambition, pride, lust, and cruelty, reigned with anarchy throughout his whole composition, and his genius was the instrument through which they annoyed mankind.

His passion was not in the least abated by hearing that she was an heiress, and would possess fifteen hundred a year the moment she became of age. Marriage he did not presume, nor even dare, to think of; his own circumstances were the least obstacle; he understood the tenor of the marriage act too well, to put to so great a hazard his own precious

cious person, for which he entertained a most profound respect; but to possess her he resolved, if he could possibly effect it, by the assistance of his own cunning, of which he had a very great opinion, and the help of his good friend the devil, whose aid he determined to implore with the greatest fervency.

The mere gratification of his lascivious desires was not the only end he proposed in the success of his schemes: he imagined, if he could once gain the possession of her person, he could easily secure her heart till the period of her becoming of age, when marriage would ensure to him, what he deemed the bulwark of happiness, *viz.* a fortune.

He

He well knew he could never obtain sufficient opportunities to wean her by degrees from a virtuous way of thinking, by means of fallacious arguments and insinuating tales, calculated for such diabolical purposes; neither would he venture to put books of a vicious tendency into her hands, lest they should fall under the inspection of those who might frustrate his designs, and render his darling scheme abortive: neither was he certain he could succeed by such means, for the young lady, though but seventeen, shewed a strength of thought far beyond her years. Her prudence, good sense, and unaffected modesty, gave no encouragement to such attacks: he therefore determined not to give any alarm

which might throw difficulties in his way, or raise suspicions to interfere with his plan of operations.

The first thing to be known was, the chamber in which she lay. This he soon discovered, by means of one of the maids, who innocently told him what she could not imagine there was any necessity to conceal. He also had the additional satisfaction to find she lay alone.

The governess was obliged to go to London, on some affairs of emergency, which were likely to detain her three or four days: Volpone determined to seize this opportunity to put his designs in practice.

Lucinda

Lucinda was remarkably fond of poetry. Accordingly, the very first evening after the old lady's departure, he put a new poem in his pocket, which had been just published, and which he knew Lucinda had never seen; and went directly to the school, pretending that his visit was merely to present her with the publication.

She asked him to sit down; it was not his business to disobey her, and he afterwards appeared to be in no hurry to depart. Supper-time approached; she desired him to stay supper; he was easily entreated, and took his seat accordingly.

It may surprize some, that she had such liberty; but this school was not under those strict regulations which some think so necessary in seminaries of this kind; regulations which make a ladies boarding school in a free country appear like a convent of nuns in a Roman Catholic monarchical state; but which are productive of much evil, since we see such frequent examples of young ladies, who fly such restrictions, binding their faith, and giving up their persons, to the first man who asked them the question, merely to escape those shackles which it was unnecessary to confine them with.

But

But in this school no rules so severely ridiculous were put in practice. The regulations used were such as the young ladies stood self-convicted were absolutely necessary, and therefore assented to with pleasure. A sameness of treatment secured unanimity and peace, a laudable distance engaged respect, while the mildest usage won the heart.

After supper, Volpone took an occasion officiously to hand a glass of wine to Lucinda, who through politeness drank it, though she seldom drank any without water being mixed with it: in this wine he had taken care to infuse a certain composition, which he had prepared on purpose, and which he knew would

render those who swallowed it senseless, for several hours, to all occurrences, though it would not take effect immediately.

He soon after took his leave, and retired, meditating on the success of his plot. About midnight, when he judged that all the young ladies and their attendants were locked in the arms of their first sleep, he left Mr. Tangent's house, without making the least noise, or disturbing any person.

In the garden belonging to the ladies school he found a ladder, which he had before observed, and destined to serve his purpose: he placed it against the wall close to Lucinda's window; as it was a
casement,

casement, he took out a quarry of glass, by ripping open the lead which inclosed and confined it; the glass he placed carefully on a ledge of the bricks; then, putting his hand through the vacancy, he opened the window, and entered the room very easily, where he soon accomplished his detestable purpose, triumphing over the insensibly passive maid, whose faculties remained fast locked up by his somniferous preparation.

After perpetrating this vile deed, he went out of the room as he came in, and, shutting the window, fastened the glass in its place as before; then, returning the ladder to its former station, he took particular care to deface the marks of its two legs, and the impression of his
own

own feet, which would otherwise have appeared in the soft bed of mould; and returning home, soon got into bed, where he remained till morning, ruminating on what had passed.

When Lucinda awoke the next day, she was greatly surprized to find it twelve o'clock at noon, and more so when the maids informed her they had tried all possible means to wake her, several times, but without success; that they began to be greatly terrified about her, fearing she was in an apoplexy. She was likewise sensible of a great alteration in herself, though insensible from whence it could proceed; and was greatly bewildered in every conjecture concerning the whole of her indisposition.

In the afternoon Volpone drank tea with her, and again found means to administer a second dose of the same drug, which, as she took it sooner than the night before, obliged her to retire sooner than ordinary to rest at night. Volpone repeated his visit with the same success; and the young lady arose sooner the next morning, having retired very early, and the effect of the second dose not being quite so potent as the first.

He privately exulted in the success of his projects; nor did one corroding thought disturb the joy with which his heart was replete, through the prosperous event of his premeditated villainy. The return of the governess prevented
any

any future repetition of his libidinous visits; neither, if he had had an opportunity, would he have continued such hazardous attempts, as his principal end was for the present answered, though such passive enjoyments were far from satisfying his desires.

Some time after, Lucinda began to discover signs of pregnancy: her appearance surprized every one; it was however conjectured that she had a dropsy, and proper remedies were accordingly tried, till time put the affair beyond a doubt, and the physicians were positive as to the real cause of Lucinda's indisposition.

All

All who knew her were alarmed. Her virtuous education, her good sense, the seeming purity of her soul, never agitated by violent passions, or in the least swayed by any inclination not laudable, together with an appearance of invincible modesty, which to all seemed unaffected, made them ready to doubt the testimony of their own senses, and the physicians assertions: but on the contrary side of the question—what could they think?—demonstration must carry conviction with it; nor was it possible for them, on cooler reflection, to deny their assent to a thing which appeared indisputably true.

At

At last they discovered that their doubts sprang from compassion only, and not from any persuasion of her innocence. Her warmth in defence of her purity, and solemn asseverations of being undefiled either in body or mind, served only to mislead them; till the arguments *pro* and *con* turned upon this single point, That the whole affair must be a great mystery, or Lucinda a great hypocrite.

Lucinda's uncle, who was her guardian and only relation, was made acquainted with the unhappy case of his niece. He came to the school; he pressed her to reveal what she knew of the affair to one who, in consideration of
his

his former love, might be won by her sincerity to forgive the slip she had made, and act the part of the fond parent the same as hitherto: but she called Heaven to witness her innocence, and affirmed, by every thing sacred, that she had not the least knowledge of the cause of her unhappiness.

She spoke with so much earnestness, and such an air of truth, that her uncle could not wholly disbelieve her. He was as much puzzled as the rest, and all concerned remained in the utmost confusion.

Volpone contrived to get into company with the uncle. He bewailed the misfortune of his niece, with the greatest
seeming

seeming sincerity; carelessly observing,
“ that perhaps she had been artfully de-
“ luded, and might unhappily have con-
“ ceived too tender an affection for the
“ delinquent, to be easily persuaded to
“ give him up to the resentment of those
“ who had a right to be offended.”

Upon this, her uncle flew to her again,
and urged her on this head; telling her,
“ if the object was unworthy of her
“ person and fortune, and yet was in
“ possession of her heart, he would wave
“ all other considerations to make her
“ happy; or, on the contrary, if the of-
“ fender was her equal or superior, he
“ would find the means to make him
“ do her justice.”

What

What could the tenderest parent have done more? or what could the unhappy lady do more than she had done to set his doubting heart at rest?

Volpone, finding his plot sufficiently ripe, begged her uncle to permit him to speak to Lucinda in private; as he had something to propose which might tend to make her easier. The uncle acquiesced, without enquiring into the particulars of his intended proposition.

When they were alone, he expressed his sorrow for her unhappiness in the most respectful manner, and then proceeded as follows:

“ Amiable

“ Amiable Miss, I have long admired
“ the beauties of your mind and person,
“ and long fancied that admiration to be
“ only such as a timorous subject pays
“ to the shining diadem of his monarch;
“ but your sufferings have awakened me
“ from my dream. I find I am more
“ intimately concerned than I thought,
“ in whatever disturbs you. All the
“ tender anxieties of love have seized
“ me: yes, amiable Miss, I love you,
“ tenderly love you; but with a purity
“ which unaffected piety feels when it
“ kneels at the shrine of adoration.
“ Excuse my boldness; the necessity of
“ the case requires such an address,
“ which is not the less respectful because
“ precipitate. With regard to the cause
“ of

“ of your present unhappiness, I truly
“ believe you guiltless: there is un-
“ doubtedly some great mystery in the
“ affair, which time may providentially
“ clear up. But I think you spotless
“ and undefiled in mind. I know you
“ innocent—I feel it here—my heart tells
“ me you are so. — But, though we are
“ conscious of our purity, we live in an
“ ill-judging and censorious world. It is
“ necessary to preserve appearances; and
“ though a clear conscience may make us
“ as happy to ourselves as we wish to be,
“ yet it is a duty we owe to our neigh-
“ bours, nay a duty we owe to Heaven,
“ to maintain an unfulled reputation in
“ the world, as an example to win others
“ to virtue. Since it is so, dear amiable
“ young lady, make me an humble in-
“ strument

“ strument to re-establish the brightness
“ of your angelic character, and clear it
“ from the stain which this affair has sul-
“ lied it with : you are acquitted in your
“ own mind ; be acquitted in the eye of
“ the world.

“ Think not, dear Miss, that any
“ thing mercenary has prompted me to
“ this proposal ; no, far be it from me
“ to put the riches of the world in com-
“ petition with your excellencies. Your
“ fortune, whatever it be, may still re-
“ main in your uncle's hands. I only
“ beg leave (if thought worthy) to be
“ permitted to admire your virtues with
“ more freedom than our situations
“ would hitherto allow, and petition to
“ be

“be united to all I think worth living
“for.”

Would not any one have thought this man to be an angel? Yes, any one who did not know him—like Lucinda, who thought so at that time.

But it may be proper to observe, that his pretended disregard of her fortune was only a copy of his countenance; for, had the marriage been consented to, and the uncle for prudential reasons had thought proper to with-hold the money, he must likewise have with-held the lady.

Lucinda thanked him for his favourable thoughts of her—told him, “she

“ would consider of what he had said;
“ but at present could not give him any
“ satisfactory answer, as her thoughts
“ were too much confused, to admit a
“ rational reflection, or establish a per-
“ manent sentiment.”

He only added, “ that if she con-
“ sented to make him happy, with the
“ concurrence of her uncle, they might
“ be married so privately, that the world
“ might easily be made to imagine
“ the nuptials had taken place long be-
“ fore, and a plausible excuse might be
“ framed accordingly, to account for
“ their concealment.”

Volpone was now going to retire,
when the uncle caught him in his arms

at

at the door of Lucinda's chamber, called him the best of men, and loaded him with as many careffes as he would have deserved had he really been what he only seemed to be.

Now it must be observed, that the particular manner in which Volpone desired to be admitted privately to converse with Lucinda had excited the curiosity of the uncle, who, desirous of coming to the knowledge of this secret conversation, followed him to Lucinda's chamber (the door of which Volpone purposely left on the jar, expecting nothing less), and heard every syllable that passed.

F 2

He

He led him to Lucinda; told her,
“that he had heard their discourse, and
“was a joyful witness of the greatness of
“mind which that young man possessed.
“He therefore entreated her, if she had
“no particular objection, to oblige him,
“by suffering him to present her hand
“to Volpone.”

She, with a blush of ineffable sweetness, gave her hand to her uncle, who placed it in Volpone's, who received it with transports which you may believe were undisssembled, since his golden dreams seemed so near being realized.

A mouse once disturbed a mountain;
and trifles have frequently overturned
states.

states. So it happened with Volpone; a small accident prevented the absolute completion of his schemes, and rendered his hitherto successful villainy abortive.

Volpone returned home; the uncle soon left Lucinda to herself, and she several times measured the length of her chamber in a disordered manner, as she laboured under a great perturbation of mind. Sensible of her innocence, she had nothing to dread from the checks of conscience; yet the censure of the world appeared terrible to her, who had hitherto enjoyed its approbation: a prospect now presented, of appearing in the eyes of mankind as immaculately pure as she knew herself to be; nor could she deem that a deception, which tended to esta-

blish a truth: Volpone's person she thought agreeable; his good sense and learning she had long admired; his wit was captivating, and his humour never failed to endear him to company. She viewed his merits with the most favourable eye; she fondly thought he possessed a good heart and an affable temper; and his respectful manner had something in it, which flattered away her sorrow with a kind of soothing admiration.

In fine, she found, upon a thorough examination, that he was not wholly indifferent to her; and was in surprize that she had not made this discovery before.

She

She thought so long with pleasure on the subject, that pleasure at length became painful; and she repaired to the drawers of a scrutore in the room, in which some books were deposited, to take one, in order to divert her mind from a train of thinking which became too intense. In turning over the books, she accidentally saw a button, which seemed to have appertained to a man's coat; she took it in her hand, viewed it attentively, and with some uneasiness recollected that she had seen Volpone wear a suit of cloaths, the buttons of which were of the same pattern. She put her memory to the stretch; she revolved in her mind the stupefaction with which she had been so unaccountably

seized—the alteration she afterwards discovered—Volpone's having supped with her the evening before—his officiousness in handing her wine—his offer of taking pollution to his arms, under a pretence of believing her mind untainted, which (though at that time despair made her, like a drowning wretch, glad to snatch at the least straw of consolation) upon a more dispassionate disquisition appeared refined policy, and the whole of her ruin a piece of designed and complicated villainy—the truth flashed upon her mind in a blaze of conviction; and though she could not penetrate into the *minutiae* of his scheme, the principal process was but too evident.

It

It must be observed, that, in getting in at the window, Volpone had, unobserved by himself, torn off this button, which flew into the room, and was picked up by the maid the next day, who, without reflecting on the oddity of a man's coat button being found in the young lady's chamber, had carelessly put it into the very drawer where Lucinda had found it.

The uncle and governess were made acquainted with the affair. They viewed it in the same light that Lucinda did. The governess had some receipts, which proved the time of her absence, when this dark deed was accomplished. The only taylor in the village was sent for;

he was desired to bring his shop-book with him, by which it was discovered, that four days after Lucinda's ruin he had done some work for Volpone; and in particular he remembered the setting a button on a coat, the buttons of which were of the same pattern as that they shewed him; but he had set one on of a pattern as near as possible, not having any exactly the same.

The uncle sent for him to drink a bottle of wine with him, the same afternoon, at the inn at which he put up. He had luckily the suit of cloaths on to which the button belonged. The uncle observed, that all the buttons, except one upon the breast, were of the same pattern as that which Lucinda had found;
and

and it was determined, by himself, the governess, and Lucinda, that he should immediately repair to a neighbouring justice of the peace, and procure a warrant, in order to secure him till the affair could be properly examined into.

But, unluckily, one of the maids, who had overheard every syllable of this conversation, had long conceived an affection for Volpone : she was alarmed when she found his life was in danger, and therefore let him know the particulars of the whole affair, and what was designed against him. He cursed his unlucky stars, himself, and mankind in general ; but, reflecting that execrations would be of no manner of use to him in the present emergency, he put his money,

and whatever else was valuable and portable, into his pockets, and made the best of his way to the next market town, where he hired post horses, in order to proceed towards London in the most expeditious manner.

The uncle, to his great disappointment, found the warrant useless: and Mr. Tangent had conceived such an opinion of Volpone, that he could scarce be persuaded of his delinquency, which his sudden absence at length put beyond doubt, though they were at a loss to know how he had received any intimation of their intentions to seize him.

Lucinda saw her shame inevitable: she dreaded the strictures of ill-nature, and
the

them alignancy of pity. These apprehensions, with the thoughts of the villain's having escaped the hand of justice to triumph in her misfortunes, made her delirious. The next day she seemed better, and desired a little mulled wine : after she had taken it, she begged to be left alone, and that nobody should disturb her, for about three hours. Her request was complied with, and the maid retired accordingly.

The maid, on her return, found that something behind the door obstructed her entrance : she exerted herself ; the door gave way, and on entering she beheld the body of Lucinda extended on the

the floor, which seemed to have fallen down that instant.

The surprize made her shriek out: her cries brought the governess and the other maids. They found Lucinda cold; she had (in a fit of distraction, as is supposed) hung herself with her garters, by flinging them over the door, which she afterwards shut: then, placing a chair against it, fastened the end of the garters about her neck, standing on the chair, which she kicked away, and ended at once her being and her troubles.

In her pocket book the following lines were found, which it was supposed she

had written the preceding day, before the delirium seized her :

“ To keep this mortal life, to shame
“ confign’d,
“ The body tainted, with a spotless
“ mind,
“ None but a timid spirit would
“ endure,
“ When everlasting life presents a
“ cure.
“ Then let the part defil’d on earth
“ remain,
“ And Heaven receive the part with-
“ out a stain.”

Thus, through the machinations of an
artful villain, perished miserably a beau-
tiful

tiful and accomplished young lady, who might, but for his hellish schemes, have adorned an exalted sphere, and shone an example of unaffected piety and constitutional virtue to the world.

The villain was condemned by all; and those who blamed her precipitancy shed a tear of pity on her fate.

But to return to Volpone: he reached London without meeting with any thing extraordinary; and, taking a private lodging, assumed a fictitious name, under which he transacted business in the capacity of a pettyfogger, a sphere of life ill suited to his ambition.

In this situation he found frequent opportunities to dupe the weak, and join the villain, till an affair obliged him to decamp with precipitation. The fact was as follows :

Volpone had often observed a very eminent tradesman, who frequented a neighbouring coffee house : he always sat in a seat by himself, and generally employed his time in reading the papers : Volpone found means to ingratiate himself into the old gentleman's favour, and seemed to be the only person with whom he chose to converse. He soon obtained a piece of his writing by stratagem, and immediately set himself to work to forge a note of hand, which appeared to have
been

been signed by the tradesman, and was made payable to himself; he took care that a companion of his, whom he properly prepared, should accidentally drop into their company on the day upon which it was dated; and, when it became due, arrested the trader accordingly. The companion swore that he was by when it was given, and Volpone received the money (by order of the court), which was fifty seven pounds; with the odd seven pounds he rewarded his understrapper.

Though he had deceived the court, he could not so easily deceive the company who frequented the coffee house: they knew the old gentleman's long-established

established good character too well, to be biaſſed in his diſfavour by this accident; and knew too little of Volpone, to entertain a very favourable opinion of him from the affair.

He perceived the contempt with which he was deſervedly treated, and abſconded the houſe accordingly.

It was juſtly imagined, that a man who could be guilty of an affair like that which has been related would not ſtop there, but ſacrifice every principle of honour and juſtice, to gratify the rapacity of his avarice. The gentlemen of the coffee houſe, therefore, determined
to

to attempt his detection; and thus executed their plan:

A man apparently poor, and seemingly simple, went to Volpone at his lodgings, telling him that he was a poor labouring man; that a relation in the country had left him a legacy, though he could not tell how much, but produced a letter which requested his attendance at Batson's coffee house in Cornhill; that, being unacquainted with coffee houses, and fearing the executor, who had the character of a rogue, should cheat him, he had waited upon him, as he heard he was a lawyer, to desire him to accompany him to the coffee house,
for

for which he would liberally reward him out of what he should receive.

They went to the coffee house accordingly, where the pretended executor was recognized by the poor man, who seemingly trusted the whole affair to Volpone. The executor took care not to name the sum of money; Volpone was equally careful not to ask it, but demanded a sight of the will. A sham will was presented him, which appeared to be properly executed. He read it, and found the legacy to be fifty pounds.

Then, returning the will, the executor presented him with a bank note of fifty pounds, with these words; “ Sir, here
“ is the whole of the legacy which was
“ bequeathed

“ bequeathed to this good man. I imagine you are empowered to give me a receipt.”

To which Volpone answered in the affirmative. He gave a receipt accordingly; but during the whole transaction the sum was never once mentioned.

He fell readily into the snare; imagining the executor to be a rogue, whom some private reasons made so careless; and the legatee to be a fool, whom it was easy to bubble.

Soon after the bank note was given, the executor took his leave, pretending haste; and going out at one door, he went round the house, and immediately came in

in at another, in order to be upon the spot when his appearance should be wanted.

When they were by themselves, Volpone told the man, that he imagined money to the value of the note would suit him better than the note itself, which he might find some difficulty in getting changed. The man acquiesced; and the honest Volpone very deliberately paid him ten pounds, affirming that to be the value of the note; and generously took a guinea from it, to reward himself for his trouble.

Now the old gentleman whom he had before defrauded, and several of the frequenters

quenter of the same coffee house, together with the mock executor, stood conspicuous before him. He was turned into a statue at their appearance: he well knew they had been witnesses to the whole transaction, as they came from the next seat to that in which he sat. He now too late perceived the trap into which he had fallen, and cursed his credulity, which had suffered him to be so easily imposed upon. However, recollecting himself, he attempted to gain the door; but his design of escaping was frustrated, and he found he must abide the censure of the company.

He was compelled to restore the fifty pound note; and the nine pounds, which he had paid the legatee instead of fifty,

was

was appropriated to the use of the poor of the parish. He then had his choice of three things; *viz.* to be carried before a magistrate—to be given up to the populace, in order to undergo a severe ducking—or to return the old gentleman's fifty seven pounds. He prudently chose the latter; and they all attended him to his lodgings, to receive the money: but they were so exhilarated with their success hitherto, that they were not quite so cautious as they should have been; for, remaining in the dining room, they suffered him to go into his bedchamber by himself, when, securing his money, he went out at the window upon the tiles of a shed, from whence he dropped into the next yard, which was that of a public house, and made his

escape through the entry (the doors being always left open during the whole day), leaving the company in the dining-room to animadvert upon his dexterity, and the landlord of the house to pay himself with what was left behind.

After some precipitate perambulation, he found himself near the Foundling Hospital. He struck cross the fields towards Pancrafs. On his way, he observed a gentleman just before him put something in a hat, which a blind beggar held out to receive charity : it was frequently the custom with this poor man, to leave a trifle of what was given in the hat, in order to excite the next passenger to imitate the former, and add his mite to the other ; he unluckily had
left

left in the hat the gentleman's gift who was passing before Volpone, imagining it to be a halfpenny, though in reality it was a half crown piece; which when our hero perceived, he very honestly, and with much dexterity, converted it to his own use, leaving two halfpence in the room of it, for which he received a thousand blessings from the poor man, who thought he had added to his store instead of robbing him.

He took up his lodgings at Kentish Town; and finding next day a convenient room in the neighbourhood, determined to fix his residence in that pleasant village, till he could hit upon some scheme to increase his finances.

He furnished himself with proper changes of apparel; and gave out that, having a competency wherewith to subsist decently, he had chosen Kentish Town for his place of residence, being fond of living out of the noise and bustle of the city.

Returning pretty late one evening from London, he was stopped in the fields by two footpads, who, after using him very ill, rifled his pockets, taking from him his gold watch, seven guineas, his pocket-book, pocket-handkerchief, cane, and hat. When they had left him, he went on as quick as possible, greatly chagrined

chagrined at his ill fortune, and fore with the bruises he had received.

Approaching towards Kentish Town, he perceived a fire at a distance; this made him quicken his pace as much as possible, for he judged it to be near the place of his habitation: drawing nearer, his measure of woe was full; for he found that the house wherein he lodged was burnt to the ground, and on enquiry was informed that scarce any thing had been saved; and what had, did not appertain to him.

He was now without money, friends, lodging, or even a hat to his head: had not all principles of virtue and honour been dead within him, a moment's re-

reflection must have made him sensible that so severe a stroke from Providence could only be meant as a just punishment for his manifold crimes: but such cogitations never entered his brain; he banished fortune, arraigned Providence, and cursed mankind in general. All that he felt, and all his wailings, proceeded from sensation, and an immoderate love of self; nor had he sentiment enough to prompt him to rational reflection. Thus was his capacity clouded by his passions, and every emotion of nature subdued by his bias to villainy.

In the neighbourhood was a public house, kept by Mr. Swaddle. Thither he retired, bewailing his double misfortune, and receiving the words of condolance

dolance from those who pitied him, or affected to pity him.

Neither Mr. Swaddle nor any one else imagined Volpone to have received any farther damage than what was temporary, in the loss of his apparel and what ready money he might casually have by him, as they all fancied him to be a gentleman of a competent fortune. It was not his business to undeceive them, and the idea of his possessions was upon this occasion of infinite service to him; for, after breakfast was ended the next morning, Mr. Swaddle took him aside, and, wiping the sweat from his face, addressed him with great deliberation, and an air of self-applause, as follows:

“To be sure, Sir, to be robbed,
“beaten, and burnt out of one’s house,
“are very terrible things: I confess, I
“should not be fond of meeting such
“accidents often myself; unless indeed
“when my wife lets her tongue run too
“much, then I wish the house was on
“fire, and she in the middle of it—hel
“—he!—he!—You’ll excuse me, Sir:
“I must enjoy my jest, if I lose my
“friend, as the saying is; but I mean
“no harm—you’ll find me a hearty fel-
“low at the bottom. But, as I was say-
“ing, we must all expect to meet with
“accidents in this life; for I have heard
“our parson say, Life is chequered, good
“and evil, light and darkness, day and
“night

“night—but we must suffer what we
“cannot avoid—patience is a virtue—
“what cannot be cured, must be endured.
“So, as this accident may have put you
“out of cash at present, till the first
“dividend of your income becomes due,
“you are welcome to my house. I am
“not afraid to let you enter my books,
“either for board or a trifling recruit of
“cash; and so suppose we drink a chirp-
“ing glass, to the encouragement of
“good fellowship.”

Volpone, who well knew Mr. Swad-
dle's disposition, shook him by the hand,
and swore he was the *heartiest* fellow in
the universe.

Now it might be imagined, from Mr. Swaddle's behaviour, that he was a good, honest, generous fellow; but those who think so will be greatly mistaken. He possessed a great share both of avarice and ill nature: but his ruling passion was pride; to gratify which, he was desirous of being estimated by the world as one of the greatest characters of the time.

He was a long while puzzled to fix upon the requisites necessary to the formation of the person who might deserve such a character, being subject to a confusion of ideas as often as he attempted to think. It was with some difficulty that he could seize an occasion when his brain was sufficiently unclouded

to finish his profound research; the result of which was, that a ranting, roaring, drinking, swearing, singing, comical, or, in other words, a *hearty fellow*, was the most exalted character which human nature was capable of producing.

Having discovered, as he thought, beyond doubt, what the greatest character was, he determined to be the thing he admired, that he might have the pleasure of applauding in himself what seemed so amiable in others. To this end, he determined to begin with the year to be a hearty fellow: he accordingly, on the new year's day following, beat his wife, hung the cats, broke the crockery ware, burnt his wig, and fried his silver watch in parsley and but-

ter. He then went to bed with a heart as light as a feather, though his carcase was as heavy as that of an ox.

The next morning he was very curious to know what his neighbours thought of him; and finding it universally believed that he was mad, he was quite in raptures, for he had often heard it affirmed by the learned, that the greatest men had always a tincture of madness, and he knew of no law that obliged an *hearty fellow* to be in his senses.

His next essay towards greatness was breaking lamps, beating watchmen, and abusing constables. At length he arrived at the glory of being able to bam a justice neatly: nay, he has (as he himself

self boasts) had the superlative honour to make a parson drunk on a Sunday morning, before he went to preach. Not but what he was frequently prosecuted, on account of some of his glorious achievements, by those whose narrow way of thinking made them condemn such as possessed a more exalted capacity; but so far was a prosecution from intimidating Mr. Swaddle, that he chuckled with delight at the thought of it; and considered an indictment as a proclamation of his fame by order of government, and the records of his fines as so many registers of his glory.

Thus he found that a *bearty fellow* must have an appearance of good humour, and be liable to pay large sums.

sums of money : he therefore disguised his furliness and avarice, that they might not interfere with his darling ambition ; like a mother who has three children, and is fond of them all, but never suffers the interest of two to obstruct the views of her favourite or doating-piece : or like—but one simile is enough for one subject.

Mr. Swaddle, having been threatened for speaking blasphemy and treason, and twice imprisoned for riots, fancied he should be the greatest of all mortals, if his corpulency would but permit him to bestir himself sufficiently to commit a rape ; which he longed to do as much as the pregnant lady did to dine with the crows upon horse flesh : for he never heard of
3. any.

any person's being hanged for one, but he envied his fate, and wished himself the honour to be hanged for him; but his bulk (which he bragged would grace a cart exceedingly) denied him that satisfaction. Thus we see one man is not to enjoy every blessing!

Such was Mr. Swaddle. I must now speak of Mrs. Swaddle, his loving yoke-fellow. She was very pretty, but very much affected in her person, and more so in her conversation, which was interlarded with so many hard words misapplied, and out-of-the-way expressions, that it was oftentimes difficult to guess to what her discourse tended.

Volpone

Volpone had for some time viewed her with an eye of lust; which he had often let her know, by ogling her and squeezing her hand when he paid her his reckoning. These intimations of his desires were not thrown away upon an idiot—she comprehended his meaning; and her penetration, joined to a sovereign contempt for her husband, greatly preposessed her in his favour.

One day, when her husband was gone to Westminster Hall, to answer for having trod the paths of glory with too much fervour, she entered Volpone's room in a careless manner, with—"My husband, Sir, is gone to Westminster
 " Hall,

" Hall, about the *litigation* of an excuse
 " for some of his *heretical* actions, as he
 " calls them. I wish he was going, never
 " to come again : for then I should not
 " be *mistreated* and *assaulted* every day in such
 " an *illustrious* manner. Pray, Sir, don't
 " you think it a burning *infamamous*
 " *scandal* for a woman so *outrageously*
 " *virtuous* as me to be abused by the
 " *benevolence* and barbarity of such a
 " *brutish christian animal*, who knows
 " nothing of the *defection* of human
 " nature, or of the *sensibilities* of tender
 " feelings. He's *detested* with such hu-
 " mours, that neither *mortal* nor *immor-*
 " *tal*, besides myself that am both,
 " Lord help me ! could bear to *counte-*
 " *nance* the *sufferance*."

Volpone

Volpone allowed that it was a thousand pities such a tender and virtuous wife should be so ill used. His concurrence with her opinion gave her occasion to hold forth in praise of virtue, which, she assured him, she possessed in the very greatest *immensity* of the word. As her elogium was somewhat long, she grew tired of standing, and therefore seated herself upon the side of the bed, which happened to be close behind her. Volpone seated himself close to her, for the benefit of hearing with greater ease; and Mrs. Swaddle was so very earnest in her harangue in praise of the theory of virtue, that she quite forgot the practice; or perhaps it might not be the virtue of
chastity

chastity of which she was so fervently speaking. However, be that as it will, Mr. Swaddle, who resembled an ox in every respect except horns, was now, by the joint endeavours of Volpone and his *varnious* wife, so decently equipped, that it is thought he would certainly cut a very respectable figure in a court of aldermen.

On leaving Volpone's apartment, Mrs. Swaddle begged him, "by the
" *infernal* powers and the river *Sticks*,
" never to let the least *monesulybil* trans-
" fire, for the *palpilation* of her heart.
" would always *decline* her to *conceive* his
" *agregous* embraces with a *rigorous* wel-
" come."

Having

Having got possession of Mrs. Swaddle's person, Volpone found it no great difficulty to persuade her to rob her husband of all the ready money in the house, and go off with him. Volpone's person was not her only inducement. She was charmed the thoughts of an intrigue, and fancied nothing could give her a greater air of gentility than to elope from her husband.

Mr. Swaddle was in reality almost mad for the loss of his money, and not a little chagrined on account of his wife's infidelity. However, he knew that it was not the business of a *bearty fellow* to be out of temper at any thing but the riot

riot act and a long sermon ; he therefore determined to make up his pecuniary loss by scoring double, and his fleshly disappointment by taking Susan Dump-
lin to his bed in the room of his wife, and had a large *bonfire* at his door that very night, to conceal his real sorrow in a pretended joy.

The lovers, fearing that Mr. Swaddle would exert himself to have them apprehended for making more free than welcome with his ready money, made the best of their way towards Bristol, as that city had the double advantage of being distant and populous.

In their way, at a small village beyond Reading, in Berkshire, they put up
at

at an obscure inn, perfectly tired with their journey, and pretty much out of temper with each other; for Mrs Swaddle began to perceive that Volpone was not altogether of that placid and complying disposition which she had imagined; and Volpone, on the other hand, concluded from some curious observations he had made, that Mrs. Swaddle would require but small temptation to induce her to play him the same trick he had so easily persuaded her to play her husband. Thus mutually displeased with each other, they partook of a light supper, and retired to rest, or rather to meditation.

At the same inn a Captain O'Connor had taken up his quarters for the night.

This

This Hibernian fortune-hunting gentleman was accompanied by the fat wife of a rich London alderman, from whom she had just eloped, deluded from her conjugal duty by the brawny charms of the brazen Grecian; so that the two ladies and two gallants, though unacquainted with each other's trepidation, were in similar terrors for fear of the two exasperated husbands, who dreamt of nothing less than pursuing their fugitive wives; for, as Mr. Swaddle had taken his maid Susan to his arms in the stead of his wife, the conscientious alderman had supplied the vacancy which the desertion of his rib had made by his side, with the less ponderous charms of a figure

figure dancer belonging to one of the theatres.

A poor woman, who had been suddenly taken ill on the road, had entered the inn about an hour before Volpone; and, after drinking a gill of wine, retired to bed immediately, where she expired in a few minutes; but this accident nobody was privy to, for, although the poor woman complained of being extremely ill when she retired, yet, as her appearance did not promise that much profit would accrue from attending her, the good benevolent landlady very humanely neglected making any enquiries about her; and servants are too fond of imitating their betters, to do any thing without a proper precedent. She was therefore

therefore stiff and cold, without engaging the thoughts of any one, in a chamber between those occupied by Volpone and the Captain.

Inns of the inferior class are too often without those necessary utensils required to prevent nocturnal perambulations; an omission of this kind in the furniture of Captain O'Connor's bedchamber obliged him to seek the further end of the gallery, on one side of which the rooms were ranged where all the passengers who came to the inn were lodged. But, as the occasion was indispensable, and the Captain hasty, he had not sufficiently scrutinized the situation of the apartment, to find it easily on his return in the dark; so that, mis-

VOL. I. H taking

taking the chamber in which the poor woman lay for his own, he went to bed to the corpse.

Volpone, being seized by a similar necessity, had emerged from his chamber in the dark, with as little precaution as the Captain, and, holding the same clue of mistake, entered the Captain's chamber instead of his own.

All was again calm and still. The poor woman had slept her last. The two criminal ladies were the images of death; and the gallants insensible of their blunder, till the Captain, finding himself extremely cold, began to nestle towards his bedfellow. But judge his astonishment, when he found the warm, bulky, plump Mrs. Tallow metamorphosed into a lean, icy,

icy, shriveled corpse. If he was cold before, he was now petrified with fear and amazement; a chilly sweat covered all his limbs, and the chattering of his teeth declared his terror.

Being unable to deduce reasons from natural causes for so surprizing a transition, all the exaggerations of the supernatural immediately rushed upon his fancy. He imagined this heart-appalling change to be but a prelude to some signal judgement, which would speedily await him, as a punishment for his manifold transgressions. He therefore began to pray with greater zeal and fervency than he had hitherto thought necessary in prayer; and ejaculated his petitions and remonstrances to St. Patrick with a fault-

tering tongue and great trepidation of spirit.

“ Arrah, honey, St. Patrick, be after
 “ forgaving me for the shins I have
 “ commatted, and I’ll forgive you for
 “ all you have suffered for my sake.
 “ O hone ! that I should ever see such a
 “ day as this night ! Oh ! pardon me
 “ for all the shins I ever commatted;
 “ I say for all, all the shins I ever did
 “ commat in times to come, and for all
 “ the shins I ever shall commat in times
 “ past—O hone !—O hone !—My shoul,
 “ leave off thy transgreashuns in time ;
 “ for if you shin long, the dibble will
 “ have you soon. O, that ever I should
 “ be gualty of adultery with Jenny
 “ O’Carrel, the young virgin of Bally-
 “ shanny ;

“ shanny ; or fornication with Mr. Al-
“ derman Tallow’s fat wife, that is now
“ changed to a lean waddow, and, if
“ ever she walks out of this room, must
“ be carried on mens shoulders ! — Oh !
“ I’ll never commat no more shins at all,
“ at all ! Oh ! forgave me for that there
“ same adultery and fornication — for
“ adultery and fornication are not mur-
“ der—and ye know, honey St. Patrick,
“ I never murdered any man in my life,
“ but old Ball, the exciseman’s horse ;
“ and I never commatted any bulglary,
“ but abusing the lord lieutenant ; nor
“ treason, but taking twelve thirteens
“ out of my father’s pocket, when he was
“ undutiful, and would not be after giv-
“ ing me money. O ! Mrs. Tallow,
“ why did ye bodder me with the glances

“ of your cheeks, and the dimples of
“ your eyes, and your diamonds, and
“ your monies? — O hone! ye see what
“ has come of it; ye went to bed fat,
“ and must get up lean; ye went to bed
“ warm, and must get up cold; ye
“ went to bed living, and must get up
“ dead — O hone! ububoo! that ever
“ I should see such a day as this night!”

Thus the Captain, who had crept as far as the bed would admit from his inanimate bedfellow, continued lamenting; but did not dare to think of quitting the chamber, or indeed the bed entirely, but suffered all that terror could inflict on a superstitious imagination.

Volpone

Volpone soon discovered the prodigious magnitude of his bedfellow, and at first was somewhat surprized at her amazing increase of bulk; but a little reflection made him easily comprehend the whole affair. He judged that, in returning from his emigration, he had mistaken some other person's chamber for his own: he however determined to remain where he was, till the dawn of the day should enable him to gratify his curiosity with respect to his bedfellow. He had no sooner taken this resolution, but to his surprize a man entered the room with a mask on his face, and a dark lantern in his hand. He drew towards the bed, and, after examining Mrs.

Tallow who was really in a sound sleep, and Volpone who pretended sleep, placed his lantern on the table, and began to search the cloaths and baggage belonging to the Captain and Mrs. Tallow.

Volpone observed him attentively, and, to his surprize, soon saw the table covered with a great quantity of gold and jewels, together with the lady's gold repeater, and gold snuff-box set with diamonds, and a gold watch with which she had presented the Captain; for Mrs. Tallow did not leave her husband empty-handed, but, as she had eased him of the care of herself, she determined likewise to ease him of the care of some other part of his property, which the
Captain

Captain undoubtedly esteemed as more valuable than herself.

Volpone with his wishes broke the tenth commandment, by coveting the property of others, and cursed the more prosperous villain in his heart; who, he did not doubt, would make a visit to his own chamber, where he had left Mrs. Swaddle, and make as free with his ill-gotten property as he had with the Captain's, by whose cloaths he imagined that a double mistake had been committed, and was indeed apprehensive that they had in the dark made an exchange both of chambers and ladies.

While Volpone employed himself in such cogitations, and the man in the

mask in packing up the cloaths, after he had tied up the money and valuables in a handkerchief which still remained on the table, the Captain entered, with his shirt and face almost covered with blood, which the agitation of his mind had occasioned to gush from his nose in great quantities; and his fear having rendered him frantic, he had abandoned the corpse in a fit of desperation. Volpone, as well as the robber, was amazed at his sanguinary appearance. The Captain, having surveyed the thief with a look of phrenzy, seized him by the collar, and vociferated with great energy, "Arrah, "honey, did I murder her?"

The rogue did not think proper to answer this interrogation, but tried to dis-

disengage himself from his gripe. But the Captain was too strong by nature, and too desperate through fear, to be easily dispossessed of his hold, so that a very severe and close scuffle ensued; which Volpone taking advantage of, stepped out of bed unperceived by the combatants, and, seizing on a poker which stood in a corner of the chimney, soon laid them both senseless on the floor. He directly secured the handkerchief which contained the money and jewels, not thinking proper to encumber himself with any thing more ponderous; and, taking the lantern, soon found his own chamber, where Mrs. Swaddle still lay locked fast in the downy arms of sleep.

Mrs. Tallow had been wakened by the scuffle between the Captain and the robber: she imagined immediately that the rencounter was occasioned by the place of their sojournment's being discovered by those whom her husband had sent in pursuit of her; but, when she perceived Volpone issue from the chimney, and knock down both the Captain and his antagonist, it terrified her so much, that she fell into a swoon, from which she did not recover till the next morning.

Though Volpone knew that it was impossible for any body to be acquainted with his having left his chamber that night, and a precipitate flight would proclaim

claim his guilt; yet he feared the Captain might recover before the robber, or that the robber might be so much hurt by the blow he had given him, as to prevent his escaping if he even should recover his senses first; in both which cases, he justly imagined, he should be secured; and on its appearing that his design had miscarried, there certainly would be a search for the things which were missing, that could no ways redound to his credit or safety: he therefore determined to seize the opportunity to enrich himself, and get rid of Mrs. Swaddle. He soon disposed of every thing about him which he intended to carry away; and was so generous, as not to leave Mrs. Swaddle a single shilling to help herself. He left
the

the gallery, descended into the kitchen, and let himself out at a back-door: in the yard he found three horses ready saddled, and no appearance of any person whom they could belong to; he took up a small bag which he saw lying upon the ground, and, mounting one of the horses, quitted the place, and struck out of the main road as soon as possible, determining to cross the country at hazard, and not to allow himself any respite till a considerable distance rendered his safety feasible.

Besides the robber who had had the scuffle with the Captain, there were two others, who, after having packed up what plate they could find (in the bag which

which Volpone had carried away with him), waited impatiently the return of their companion; but not finding it so speedy as they expected, they determined to seek him. After some time spent in searching, they found him just in the manner Volpone had left him; and, having brought him to himself, took him, and the cloaths belonging to the Captain and Mrs. Tallow, which they found ready packed up, to their horses; but they were in no little consternation on missing one of the horses and the most valuable part of their booty: nor did the declaration of the robber who had fought with the Captain tend to clear the mystery, or dissipate their fears, when he averred that he had not received the blow, which rendered him senseless, from his antagonist,

but

but from an invisible hand, who must undoubtedly have carried away the money, watches, and jewels, which he had tied up in a handkerchief prior to the engagement. They began to be dubious of their safety, fearing the country might be alarmed, and therefore determined to be gone with all possible expedition. Two of them mounted on one horse, and the third with the bundles on the other, when they made the best of their way to the most secure of their lurking-places.

In the morning, the Captain recovered first; and, after looking about him wildly for some time, entered into a very critical scrutiny concerning both his sanity and identity. As soon as he had settled it to
his

his own satisfaction that he was not light-headed, he turned his whole thoughts to prove whether he was Captain O'Connor or not Captain O'Connor : and the mystery, like Giles Jolt's, he greatly apprehended, would be cleared to his loss. He first of all carefully examined his legs and feet, as he sat on the ground ; and, after a minute survey, could not find any reason to conclude they were not his old supporters : in particular, he thought, he could take his corporal oath as to the calves of his legs, whose expanded appearance had attracted the notice of so many brisk widows ; but then he was not clear, that if it should happen to prove that he in reality had no right to the name of O'Connor, whether he could venture to swear they were his own legs : for, if he
was

was not Captain O'Connor, and those legs did belong to Captain O'Connor, they certainly could not belong to him. He afterwards proceeded to his thighs and body, when, recognizing a mole on his right breast, and finding nothing to stagger his belief about his body, he concluded that he certainly must be Captain O'Connor, from the soles of his feet to his shoulders upwards. He was indeed very desirous of seeing his back, and for that purpose turned himself round several times, without attempting to rise; but his back was so very cautious, that his eyes could never fix one look upon it; which made him wisely conclude, that a man ought to have eyes behind as well as before, or how was it possible to know whether

whether his back belonged to him or not.

After he had amused himself for some time with these philosophical thoughts, he recollected, that the identity of a man's person was best discoverable by the features of his face ; and a mirror kindly attracting his notice at the same time, he instantly arose from the ground, and, approaching towards it, observed with evident signs of discontent a large swelling upon his forehead, and the bloody condition of his face and shirt. Indeed he had before observed the crimson appearance of his linen ; but, as he was still in doubt whether he was Captain O'Connor or not, he was likewise in doubt whether
he

he had a right to a clean shirt or a bloody shirt: he now concluded that he was Captain O'Connor, though not Captain O'Connor *in statu quo*; and went from the glass towards the bed with some satisfaction, and this expression: "Arrah, faith, " and I believe I am myself!"

Approaching towards the bed, he perceived Mrs. Tallow's face, which appeared like the moon when its orb is full: he recollected that he had not in the night touched her face, at the time he discovered the diminution of her body; and therefore imagined it might have retained its *primæval* appearance, though her body had been shriveled up to so small a compass, and in so miraculous a manner: but,

to

to come to a certainty, he turned down the cloaths, and to his very great amazement found Mrs. Tallow as bulky as ever. This mystery was too extensive for the line of his understanding to measure: he thought, as she had regained her form, it was very probable she might likewise have regained her life; to be assured of which, he began to shake her pretty roughly, which soon brought her to her senses. As soon as the Captain perceived she opened her eyes, he addressed her with a "Dibble burn you, how came you alive and fat, when you was a little while ago dead and lean?"

Mrs. TALLOW.

"Dead and lean! why, you're mad."

CAP-

CAPTAIN.

“ Mad! arrah, honey Tallow, but you
“ wash fairly out! I thought indeed my-
“ self, that, as shoon as I was after wak-
“ ing, I had lost my wits; but I found
“ ’em again as shoon as I fancied I’d
“ lost ’em. But where’s the lean bady
“ ye had when ye lost the fat one?”

Mrs. TALLOW.

“ Lean body, and fat one! why, you
“ certainly must be mad. But what’s be-
“ come of the men my husband sent to
“ pursue us?”

CAPTAIN.

“ Men to pursue us! The dibble of
“ any men but miracles pursue us, and
“ they

“they are men enuff in all consthance.
 “But I balieve you’ve a mind to make
 “me think in earnest, that I’ve only
 “found my wits again in jest—but pray
 “don’t think to bodder me.”

Mrs. TALLOW.

“Oh! Captain, Captain, I’m afraid, if
 “we have not both lost our wits, we have
 “lost our money and cloaths.”

This was the first moment the thoughts
 of the money and cloaths had entered the
 Captain’s head ; and they were both soon
 convinced to their sorrow, that Mrs.
 Tallow’s surmise was but too true. Such
 an unfortunate discovery had well nigh
 driven them mad indeed; when the land-
 lord

lord and landlady appeared, heavily lamenting the loss of their plate. They were all soon joined by Mrs. Swaddle, who had discovered her unhappy situation, and justly imagined she was indebted for it to the perfidy of Volpone.

Upon comparing notes, it was concluded, that Volpone was the sole, or at least principal, thief; and Mrs. Swaddle, instead of being compassionated for the part she bore in the general misfortune, was obliged to put up with a great number of bitter reproaches from the rest of the injured persons; and was blamed for the villainy of the man who had appeared to be her husband, almost as much as if she had committed the robbery herself: nay, they were for some time in doubt, whether

whether she might not be an accomplice, and left behind to divert them from, or discover the route of, a pursuit, in order to give timely notice of approaching danger to her colleagues: but, on more mature reflection, the absurdity of such a supposition was too obvious, to suffer them to continue their opinion.

What puzzled them most was, the Captain's persisting in his tale, that Mrs. Tallow, whom he called his wife, had been changed into a cold, lean, shriveled corpse, in a most miraculous manner, and had regained her original form in a manner equally miraculous and astonishing; and that himself had been beaten and bruised into that miserable condition,

without feeling the blows, or being sensible when he received them; for, as he was frantic at the time, he remembered nothing of the scuffle: but Mrs. Tallow was equally positive as to the combat between the Captain and the robber; and insisted that, during the struggle, a man in his shirt came down the chimney, and knocked them both down: what happened after, she could not tell; for the fright had so affected her, that she fainted, and the first object which presented itself to her on the return of her senses was the Captain, in that bloody condition which soon brought on the discovery of their misfortune. Who this man could be that came down the chimney, or what was become of the person who was knocked down with the Captain, still remained

remained mysterious : however, they knew that Volpone was gone off, and that the house had been robbed ; and it was universally agreed, that they were all ruined and undone.

The landlady at length recollected the poor woman, when, finding her dead, and stone-cold, they began to find the meaning of the Captain's story of Mrs. Tallow's miraculous metamorphosis ; and, upon his acknowledging that she was the same as she then appeared to be, to the best of his knowledge and remembrance, when he left his chamber, but was on his return changed to what very well answered to a description of the old woman's corpse, they saw clearly into the whole affair, except that part in

which Mrs. Tallow insisted that a man in nothing but his shirt had come down the chimney, and laid both the Captain and the robber senseless on the floor together: this part of the fact appeared so dark and mysterious, that they at length concluded the lady must certainly have made a mistake in her fright; but Mrs. Tallow was obstinate in averring the truth of what she had at first advanced.

Mine host and hostess were obliged to sit down with their loss, though I cannot say content.

Mrs. Swaddle was taken into keeping by the master of a company of strolling players, where she had soon after the happiness

piness of gratifying her vanity, by sustaining the dignified characters of Princesses, Queens, and Empreſſes, three times in a week, which to her was the ſublimeſt ſatisfaction; though ſhe was often obliged to ſhew her airs-royal at night, without having had a ſingle meal during the day.

Mrs. Tallow was ſoon convinced it was beſt to return to her husband the Alderman; who forgave her, and received her again to his embraces, on her ſolemnly promiſing never to play him ſuch another trick, nor to deſire to wear the breeches, as ſhe uſed to do.

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The Captain found some charitable Hibernian gentlemen at Reading, who assisted him to return to his own country again, whither he retired, heartily sick of fortune-hunting.

And as for the poor woman, she was buried by the parish, after the searchers had declared she died a *natural* death; for so starving to death is called in this land of liberty and christianity.

Volpone, who intended to gain Dover as speedily as possible, through cross-roads and bye-ways, in order to pass over to France, had got within two miles of that place, when he was surrounded

rounded by a company of smugglers, who stripped him as naked as when he came into the world; and, in that distressed condition, left him to the care of Providence.

END OF VOL. I.